

**QUESTION:**

Elizabeth asks, “Will President-Elect Barack Obama be giving a State of the Union speech within his first month of office? Are there any trends in recent history regarding a new President giving a State of the Union speech?”

**ANSWER:**

The decision of when to address a joint session of Congress lies with the President though he must receive a formal invitation from the Congress to do so. The only constitutional requirement, in Article II, Section 3 of the US Constitution, is that the President, “shall from time to time give to the Congress information regarding the state of the union, and recommend to their consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient.” The modern practice of regular joint session addresses began in 1914 during the Presidency of Woodrow. As the list below illustrates, almost every President in modern history has given some form of Joint Session address within a month of their inauguration. Typically, the President will address Congress to emphasize some issue of importance, such as a perceived national priority or a campaign promise - only Presidents Nixon and Ford did not follow that trend.

**President Franklin D. Roosevelt (D)**

Inaugurated on 4 March 1933

First Joint Session Speech on 3 January 1934

(The 20<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the United States changed inaugurations to be January 20<sup>th</sup> for presidents’ inaugurated after 1933)

**President Harry S Truman (D)**

Sworn In on 12 April 1945

First Joint Session Speech on 16 April 1945, Prosecution of the War

First State of the Union Address on 6 January 1947

**President Dwight D. Eisenhower (R)**

Inaugurated on 20 January 1953

First State of the Union Address on 2 February 1953

**President John F. Kennedy (D)**

Inaugurated First on 20 January 1961

First State of the Union Address on 30 January 1961

**President Lyndon B. Johnson (D)**

Sworn In 22 November 1963/ Assumption of Office Joint Session 27 November 1963

First State of the Union Address on 8 January 1964

**President Richard M. Nixon (R)**

Inaugurated First on 20 January 1969

First Joint House and Joint Senate Speech on 13 November 1969

First State of the Union Address on 22 January 1970

**President Gerald R. Ford (R)**

Sworn In on 9 August 1974/Assumption of Office Joint Session on 12 August 1974

First Joint Session Speech on 8 October 1974, Economy

First State of the Union Address on 15 January 1975

**President Jimmy Carter (D)**

Inaugurated First on 20 January 1977

First Joint Session Speech on 20 April 1977

First State of the Union Address on 19 January 1978

**President Ronald Reagan (R)**

Inaugurated First on 20 January 1981

First Joint Session Speech on 18 February 1981, Economic Recovery

First State of the Union Speech on 26 January 1982

**President George H.W. Bush (R)**

Inaugurated First on 20 January 1989

First Joint Session Speech on 9 February 1989, Building a Better America

First State of the Union Speech on 31 January 1990

**President William Clinton (D)**

Inaugurated First on 20 January 1993

First Joint Session Speech on 17 February 1993, Economy

First State of the Union Address 25 January 1994

**President George W. Bush (R)**

Inaugurated First on 20 January 2001

First Joint Session Speech on 27 February 2001, Budget

First State of the Union Address 29 January 2002

**President Barack Obama (D)**

Inaugurated on 20 January 2009

First Joint Session Speech on 24 February 2009